

Love flowers, love life

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Jasmine fragrance fills the air. The little shop is a garden from "A Thousand and One Nights." Dianne Bell, as usual, was working on a flower arrangement. We were passing night-ships on the day before Valentine's, possibly her busiest day of the year, but we connected later in the week.

"These days, the 'art' is mostly in



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

my arrangements," she explained. She still has a few small prints by local artists, but Duxbury Flowers and Art in the Duxbury Marketplace near Hall's Corner is mostly flowers these days.

"But artists are always welcome. Come in and paint my flowers any time," she added. "In fact, anyone can just drop in whenever they want."

Dianne explained that the economy is slow for artists. Top-quality painters are holding their works until things improve and people have more discretionary funds.

She showed me around the shop, a cozy place on two levels, with the large materials for arrangements down

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a few steps, where two comfy chairs wait for visitors. It's the closest thing to an office, where anyone from brides to widows can sit and rest, and work with Dianne to plan their floral arrangements.

"I have a fascination for natural things," she said. "I keep a few items with 'bling' for those who want it."

She tucked a sparkling miniature pheasant into a new corner. The rest of the room was filled with fronds, flowers and feathers all from nature; only occasionally were they altered in color, and never in form or pattern.

"I love coming here myself. I feel sorry for anyone who doesn't love their job," she said.

She moved the whole time we talked, gliding through the scent of jasmine, and gathering a token of tulips and daffodils to mark our meeting. I tried to refuse, but the flowers were so fresh, and I needed a breath of springtime.

Razia's coming to town! Sunday, March 6, from 3-5 p.m. at the Senior Center, Razia Jan and the Duxbury Rotary will present tea, Afghan desserts, and Razia's update of the activities at the Zabuli Education Center for Girls and Women, the school near Kabul in war-ravaged Deh Sabz, once a lush suburb of Kabul. Its orchards and vineyards – for raisins, not wine – are slowly being brought back to life. Razia's presentation is entitled "Getting to Peace, One Educated Girl at a Time," will highlight the progress, and share the needs for Razia's unique approach.

A former business woman in Duxbury, Afghan-born Razia Jan, in concert with the Duxbury Rotary and the generosity of many others, founded, built, and supervises the Zabuli School. The story of the school's opening still lives on the Duxbury Clipper Web site – just click on "The Road to Zabuli" for the background, or check out raziarayofhope.org for more information and pictures.

In recent years, Razia has returned to Afghanistan to work for the USAID sponsored NGO, Arzu Rugs (arzurugs.org). This group supports Afghan rug weavers with a fair price for their rugs, along with educational and health supports for the weavers and their families. Women weave Afghan rugs, and the Arzu program includes a bonus stipend paid directly to the weaver, cash in hand. The families also agree to send one adult woman to school, along with all the children in the family. Arzu sells museum-quality rugs online, but they've added an easily affordable gift to the mix. In collaboration with peacecord.org, you can buy a peace bracelet woven by Arzu rug weavers for only \$10. The bracelets are woven from parachute cord, decorated with an authentic military button, materials that are all too easy to find. The Web site says that 100 percent of the proceeds go to support grassroots programs in rural Afghanistan.

Weaving peace from buttons, parachutes, and educated girls. Now that's a breath of springtime.